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The Honorable Gavin Newsom  
Governor, State of California  
State Capitol  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: San Luis Obispo County plan for easing COVID-19 restrictions

Dear Governor Newsom:

While the COVID-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented challenges to all Californians, we have seen an extraordinary response from residents working with common purpose, in concert with their public servants and agencies. The result has allowed our state and its citizens to exert a measure of control that has saved thousands of lives and prepared us well to continue addressing upcoming threats.

The societal costs have been enormous, and we know there are many challenging days ahead -- but as you are aware, public discussion is turning toward easing restrictions, where warranted, in order to reopen our communities and our economy.

We endorse the State's "Roadmap to Modify the Stay-At-Home Order," released April 14, 2020, and appreciate your view that, in this diverse state, "localism is determinative." We believe that these points, taken together, indicate the necessity of a strong, continuing partnership between state government and its 58 counties, as we navigate a course out of this disaster.

We understand that a rational transition to local control depends on metrics associated with the six indicators in the State's Roadmap, and that we will see further development of those markers in coming days. As SLO County plans for both managing the continuing COVID-19 emergency under our local stay-at-home order (issued March 18, 2020) and for a gradual recovery under more local control, we have incorporated the six indicators into an approach based on public health science and data.

Attached hereto, we offer for your consideration, San Luis Obispo County's local guide for a carefully-phased easing of restrictions put in place by the State and local stay-at-home order. The SLO County guide was developed by a strong team of medical and public health professionals, public agency staff, legal experts and elected officials. Input was also solicited from leaders in business, education, transportation, NGOs and the faith community.

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**County of San Luis Obispo Government Center**

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The SLO County guide outlines the steps for re-opening that can be safely taken in our community, balanced with resumption of individual and economic activities as the COVID-19 epidemic evolves. It provides measurable decision points to identify how phased transitions can occur and which public health criteria will inform decisions to loosen or tighten restrictions.

The SLO County guide is aligned with the State Roadmap and consistent with the federal government's "Guidelines: Opening Up American Again" and criteria put forth by Resolve to Save Lives (RSL), a global health initiative that describes the "adaptive response" to the COVID-19 pandemic. We find several points of consensus among these sources. Our guide builds on these commonalities, bridges their discrepancies, and provides a solid foundation for the recommended actions of our guide.

The SLO County guide addresses California's six indicators for modifying the stay-at-home order, including:

- The ability to monitor and protect our communities through testing, contact tracing, isolating, and support for those who are positive or exposed;
- The ability to prevent infection in people who are at risk for more severe COVID-19;
- The ability of the hospital and health systems to handle surges;
- The ability to develop therapeutics to meet the demand;
- The ability for businesses, schools, and childcare facilities to support physical distancing; and
- The ability to determine when to reinstitute certain measures, such as the stay-at-home orders, if necessary.

Three additional unique factors are addressed for SLO County:

1. The popularity of our county as a tourist destination. It is likely that tourism will increase, albeit not likely to previous years' levels, as people tire of stay-at-home orders and the weather warms.
2. The presence of a significant number of college students spending time outside of the area and potentially returning with COVID-19 with or without symptoms. With student populations of 8,000 and 22,000, respectively, Cuesta College and Cal Poly could significantly increase risk at the county level.
3. A lack of immunity for most residents, given a relatively low prevalence of COVID-19 during the first wave, as compared to other areas of California.

As specifically noted in the State Roadmap, until we build immunity, our local actions will be directed to achieve the following:

- Ensure our ability to care for the sick within our hospitals;
- Prevent infection in people who are at high risk for severe disease;
- Build the capacity to protect the health and well-being of the public; and
- Reduce social, emotional and economic disruptions

San Luis Obispo County looks forward to further discussions with your office and other state agencies as we transition toward expanded local control. We believe that the SLO County guide provides a health-focused, comprehensive, science-based, publicly supported approach, that includes key indicators and metrics, to support a rational reopening of our public life.

Thank you,

Cc: Dr. Sonia Y. Angell, Director, Department of Public Health  
Dr. Mark Ghaly, Secretary, Health and Human Services Agency